



**There's a fine line between reality and fantasy and Benjamin finds himself wondering which side of the line he is on**

BY ROXANNE MEHTA

Director Malin Erixon is very interested in seeing what happens to people when they think no one is around. "I especially like to experiment with what happens when people have a little too much alone-time," she says. It is this very interest that propelled her to make 'Benjamin's Flowers', a 12-minute 2D animated short that gives us a glimpse into Benjamin's life. Loneliness drives him to seek company in his imagination where the lines between reality and fantasy get blurred. Now his loneliness has tarried for so long that he has difficulty in differentiating reality from fantasy.

Erixon always begins working with the character she likes. She develops the character before she sees the exact story. And this holds true for her 2D animated short 'Benjamin's Flowers' too. It was Benjamin's personality that determined the events in the story. "What is Benjamin trying to tell us? What would Benjamin do in this situation? He sort of shapes the story himself," says the director.

Erixon tries to lend a handmade look to all her work. This is the reason why she works with classic animation, drawn frame by frame. The backgrounds for this film were done by hand and then altered, coloured and worked upon in Adobe Photoshop. The animation was put together in Toon Boom Studio and the film was edited using Final Cut Pro. All this was done on a MacBook Pro.

# Benjamin's flowers



Most of the technical challenges cropped up at the very end of production. Erixon had trouble getting the HDCam tape made correctly. "It's hard when you know enough to realize that something isn't right but not enough to make it right. It also seems to be very hard to make a good DVD of a film like this where many things are happening in the picture, in every frame. So even with



several experts involved, it was hard to get some of the scenes perfect," she says.

According to Erixon, there were two scenes that really took a lot of time and effort to create. They were taxing and so compromises had to be made. The bar scene was especially challenging because of the smoky atmosphere, and the ocean scene was very tricky because of all the spinning flowers it



contained. However, it was the last scene that proved to be most difficult. "I wanted my character to form the story "himself" and in this case it was hard to figure out exactly how Benjamin was to sum it all up," says the director.

'Benjamin's Flowers' is making heads turn as it makes its journey across international festivals. It has already made it to the Official Selections and Best Film nominations at several festivals and was awarded The Festival Award at Stockholm International Film Festival 2012. Erixon is delighted that her film is being enjoyed and the appreciation boosts her confidence and odds at financing her future projects. This film was made on a budget of around \$60,000 and took approximately a year to make.

Erixon hopes that people who watch the film are able to delve into its deeper and finer threads. "I hope that the viewers notice the film's different layers and that they see both the humour and the sadness of the story and its character," says the director. ♦

**Artist's bio**



**Malin Erixon**

Malin Erixon was born in Sweden, but spent most of her childhood and teenage years in the USA. She studied Communications at Berghs School of Communication, Graphic Design at Forsbergs School of Design, and Animation and Animated Film at Konstfack University College of Arts, Crafts and Design.

In 2000, she started a company called Ganzanderes where she still freelances doing illustration, design and animated film, contracted as well as independent productions. She has had the pleasure of showcasing her films at film festivals and

events across the globe and has received several recognitions and awards. Her animated short 'Death by Heart' (2005) has bagged prizes at the Stockholm International Film Festival, at Bradford Animation Festival and at Ottawa International Animation Festival amongst others and has been shown at the Modern Museum of Art (Moderna Museet) in Stockholm.

At the moment, Malin is very busy working on an animated short currently titled 'Hand Show'. It is based on some choreography that she saw a few months ago and shows how culture know-it-alls, tired party animals and no-clue friends of the artists, all go to see a dance show that ends up being far from what they expected.

Check out more about Malin's company at [www.ganzanderes.com](http://www.ganzanderes.com) and update yourself about 'Benjamin's Flowers' at [www.benjaminflowers.com](http://www.benjaminflowers.com).